



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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Brian Kennedy
Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20210

Mr. Kennedy:

During the week of February 21, 2011, I held a series of Veteran's Advisory Committee Meetings in my district with several hundred veterans in attendance representing every major conflict since World War II. I was privileged to speak with many of the veterans present in an effort to find ways to better serve the brave men and women who proudly served our country.

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was established to meet the needs of separating service members during their period of transition into civilian life by offering job-search assistance and related services. In speaking with my constituents, it was apparent that some men and women who served in Korea, Vietnam, and especially the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan were slipping through the cracks. Returning servicemen and women echoed similar sentiments and frustrations with a Transition Assistance Program that appears to be burdened with significant gaps in consistency of services, including difficulties with finding information regarding financial aid programs, relocation assistance, and post-military education applications.

Just last week, the Department of Labor released numbers showing that young male veterans, those ages 18 to 24, returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan, had an unemployment rate of 21.9 percent. Coupled with Florida's current unemployment rate over 12 percent, it is obvious that improvements in TAP and other veteran's assistance programs would allow service members and their families to make a more seamless transition from military service to the civilian workplace.

I respectfully request that the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Transportation and the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) review the policies of the Transition Assistance Program. It is my hope that the Departments will work in coordination with my office to open a broader dialogue on the issues with TAP that are of concern to my constituents. Among these concerns is a need to expand this program beyond military bases and bring these services to the local VA facilities, veteran centers, and community centers. Bringing the program closer to the homes of our returning veterans could be a positive step toward achieving a higher participation rate among veterans and their families. A more localized TAP program would also allow for greater follow up with returning service members, an area which I believe is in need of improvement.

It is my hope that through this collaborative effort, we can eliminate the inconsistencies, prevent individuals from slipping through the cracks, and better serve our veterans in their reintegration into civilian life. I appreciate your taking the time to review my request, and I look forward to an open dialogue with your office as we look to revise this program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ted Deutch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ted" and last name "Deutch" clearly legible.

Representative Ted Deutch

Cc: Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs, Joan M. Evans
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, Elizabeth King